Homeland security initiative takes Memphis' ORNL technologies to the nation

The Department of Homeland Security's recent selection of Memphis as a "best practices" model for high-tech security measures could speed the implementation of similar technologies in other cities.

As the third of four sites to be named under DHS' Regional Technology Integration Initiative, Memphis becomes a source of practical security "know-how," providing technology solutions to security concerns, lessons learned and other data to help local and regional sites improve preparedness and response in emergencies such as natural disasters and terrorist attacks.

Other DHS sites are Cincinnati and Anaheim. In press statements about the program, Homeland Security Under Secretary for Science and Technology Charles McQueary said selected locations will provide an environment for advanced security technologies and provide data on how best to choose, deploy, and manage these technologies to strengthen the security posture of these and other local communities.

One piece of Memphis' security package is technology developed at Oak Ridge National Laboratory known as Sensornet, a sensor integration architecture for a national warning alert network that greatly expedites detection of biological, chemical, or radiological releases and relay critical data to first responders within minutes.

Jim Kulesz, project manager for ORNL's Memphis Operational SensorNet system at the Port of Memphis, said data from the Port of Memphis will help researchers assess and improve the capabilities of SensorNet and other technologies for harbor, maritime, and freight security integration on a national scale.

"Our partnership with the Port of Memphis will be a valuable asset in the development and improvement of ORNL sensor, communications and information technologies for homeland security and national defense applications," Kulesz said. "Because of its geographic location, waterways and position as a national hub for shipping and distribution, Memphis provides a perfect model for deploying SensorNet and other new homeland security applications."

SensorNet partners include the Tennessee Office of Homeland Security, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and several universities and commercial partners. ORNL is managed for DOE by UT-Battelle.

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